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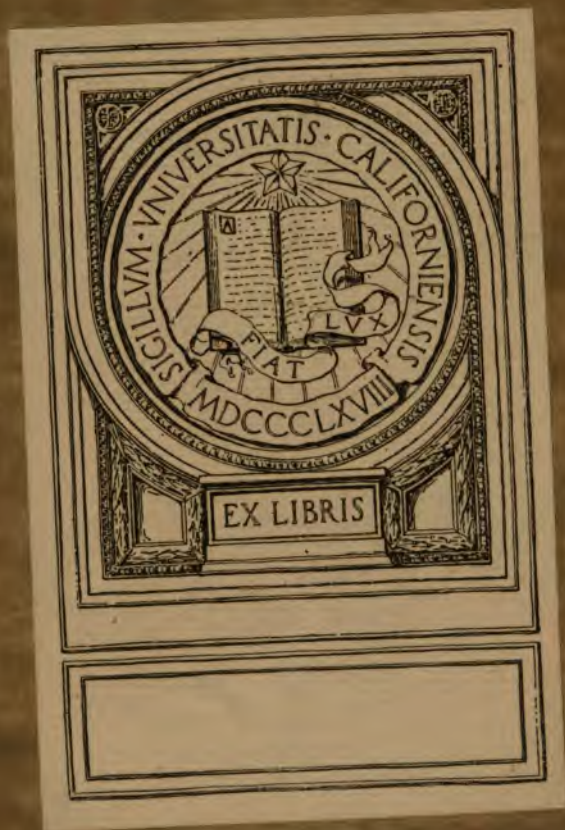
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INDUSTRIAL UNREST

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The Reports of the Commissioners (July 1917)
Collated and Epitomised

BY

SIR WILLIAM CHANCE, Bt., M.A.

Chairman of Committee
British Constitution Association

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NAMES OF THE COMMISSIONERS

I. NORTH-EASTERN AREA :

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Mr. PHILIP BRIGHT.
Mr. HENRY DAVIES.

II. NORTH-WESTERN AREA :

His Honour Judge PARRY (*Chairman*).
Mr. JOHN SMETHURST.
Mr. J. R. CLYNES, M.P.

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IV. WEST MIDLAND AREA :

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Secretary to the Commissioners :

Mr. S. M. HODGSON.

Industrial Unrest

THE causes of "Industrial Unrest" so called have been recently inquired into by special Commissioners appointed by the present Prime Minister. For this purpose the country was divided into eight districts (Ireland as usual being excluded): six English—North-Eastern, North-Western, Yorkshire and East Midlands, West Midlands, London and South-Eastern, and South-Western; the other two being Scotland and Wales (including Monmouth).¹ Each district had its own separate Commissioners, who issued separate reports. Considering the importance of the inquiry and the large amount of ground to be covered, it is almost without precedent, we should imagine, that the work should have occupied only one month (12th June to 12th July, 1917), while two of the reports, especially those for the North-Western area and Wales, are most comprehensive and almost voluminous.

I. THE GENERAL CAUSES OF INDUSTRIAL UNREST

Industrial Unrest is, of course, no new thing, but it is alleged to have been aggravated and intensified by war conditions. So far as the South Wales Coalfield is concerned

¹ When references to these reports are made they are marked with the initial letters of each district, e.g., N.E. for North-Eastern, N.W. for North-Western, Y. & E.M. for Yorkshire and East Midlands, W.M. for West Midlands, L. & S.E. for London and South-Eastern, S.W. for South-Western, S. for Scotland, and W. for Wales and Monmouth.

it had become almost a permanent condition, and existed before the war: (W. p. 22). Broadly speaking, it arises "from human selfishness in all classes, a narrow outlook on the possibilities of co-operation, and forgetfulness of the golden rule 'to do unto others as you would be done by'" (N.W. p. 11); causes which no Government can remove. In its political aspect it is the result of "a struggle by the workers to secure a larger share of the profits of industry and a greater control over the conditions under which they work and live" (W.M. p. 3). "There exists an element inclined to methods tending to undermine the authority of the duly authorised Executive Councils and District Committees of the Unions, and who are desirous of using the machinery of the Unions to further their own extreme views" (S. p. 3). But "quite distinct from this revolutionary element there is another class who perhaps do something to create a form of unrest, not altogether to be deprecated. . . . We refer to the growing class among the workers of this country who are taking an interest in economic questions, and are studying the principles of political economy. This class which is not at all in sympathy with the extremists first referred to is, it is recognised, inspired by a genuine desire to better the conditions of the workers by obtaining for them a larger share in the results of industry. A strong feeling exists that the workers are not fairly treated in the apportionment of the results of the joint effort of employer and employees" (*Ibid.*).

The *permanent* causes of the unrest as distinguished from the *temporary* ones are carefully gone into in the Wales and Monmouthshire Report (pp. 22-24). They are dealt with from the economic, social and political points of view respectively as follows :—

Economic. "(a) While there has been an advance in money wages during recent years, more particularly since 1895, there has been a decrease in real wages, and concurrently with this there has been a steady movement for the raising of the standard of living which naturally necessitates an increase in real wages. Employers have, of course, resisted the demands of the workman for wage increases for the reason that the concession of such demands tended to reduce the margin of profits or were not otherwise justi-

fied. This conflict of forces has resulted in a spirit of antagonism between Capital and Labour.

"(b) The adoption by the workers of the principle that wages should be fixed on the basis of a satisfactory standard of living and the advocacy of a still further view that, even with the wage-rate based on the standard of living, workers should also share in the prosperity of their particular industry.

"(c) The adoption by a section of the workers of the theory that the restriction of output is in the interest of their class.

"(d) The concession of wage advances to one industrial class has accentuated the disparity of wages between that class and a lower paid one in another industry or in another section of the same industry, and this has resulted in a demand by the latter for wage advances.

"(e) The machinery for settling disputes and fixing rates of wages in certain industries has not always worked smoothly, and the delays that occur in the settlement of disputes tend to exasperate the men and cause them to resort to extreme measures.

"(f) The refusal on the part of a small section of workers to recognise their obligation to join the trade union of their industry, though deriving the full benefit of all advantages gained through the Union, is one of the most prolific causes of sudden stoppages and of threats to strike. The difficulty is especially pronounced in the coal-mining industry of South Wales, but is not confined to that industry.

"(g) Some of the employers, also, have occasionally manifested an unsympathetic attitude towards trade unionism, and this has confirmed the men's impression that the employers are hostile to them and their organisation. Irritation is frequently caused also by the fact that facilities are rarely given by the employers to enable the unions to bring non-unionists into membership of their lodges.

"(h) In addition to the above general causes there are a number of causes special to particular industries or groups of industries. Of these we can only enumerate the following :—

"(1) In addition to lowness of wages, railway workers feel aggrieved at their long hours of labour.

“(2) The casual nature of the employment of dock and wharf labourers and general cargo men produces an often paralysing uncertainty which tends to a certain irregularity of habits and to reckless and impulsive action.

“(3) The employment on English ships of cheap Chinese labour, while British seamen are unemployed, is said to cause great indignation amongst sailors, and threats of serious strikes are being freely made. The feeling with reference to this matter is intense and is likely to lead to serious trouble—almost at any time—unless the matter is promptly attended to.

Social. “The conviction that Capital and Labour are necessarily hostile, a conviction engendered by conflict on industrial matters, has been accentuated by the fact that the social conditions of the working classes are of an unsatisfactory character. This fact was brought out by numerous witnesses both on the employers’ side and the men’s side, and there can be no doubt that, although not always expressed, the workers feel deeply discontented with their housing accommodation and with their unwholesome and unattractive environment generally. The towns and villages are ugly and overcrowded; houses are scarce and rents are increasing, and the surroundings are insanitary and depressing. The scenery is disfigured by unsightly refuse tips, the atmosphere polluted by coal dust and smoke, and the rivers spoilt by liquid refuse from works and factories. Facilities for education and recreation are inadequate and opportunities for the wise use of leisure are few. The influence of the social factors on the creation of industrial unrest cannot easily be measured, but that their influence is great is undeniable.

Political. “The sense of antagonism between Capital and Labour has been considerably deepened during recent years by the propaganda of a small but earnest group of men whose teachings are rapidly permeating the entire trade union movement. Advanced causes feed on discontent, and the indisposition of employers to concede the claims of the workers to a higher standard of life has provided fuel for the propaganda of the Independent Labour

Party and more recently, of the enthusiasts of the Central Labour College movement.

"The influence of the 'advanced' men is growing very rapidly, and there is ground for belief that under their leadership attempts of a drastic character will be made by the working classes as a whole to secure direct control by themselves of their particular industries. Hostility to capitalism has now become part of the political creed of the majority of trade unionists in the mining, if not in other industries, and unless the employers are prepared to meet the men part of the way disaster must overtake the mining industry in the South Wales Coalfield. Nearly all movements initiated by the South Wales Miners' Federation during recent years, consciously or unconsciously, are directed towards the overthrow of the present capitalist system and the establishment of a new industrial order under which the workers will have a greater measure of control over their industry and a larger measure of the produce of their labour.

"Opinions are as yet divided as to whether such overthrow is to be accomplished by political or industrial action, or by both. Until recently the political method was most popular, but industrial action is now in the ascendant. This is possibly due to the fact that the miners have been disillusioned by the failure of the Labour Party to bring about a complete change in the industrial fabric during the past ten years in which they have held a number of seats in the House of Commons. The lack of confidence in Government action, moreover, is not confined to the men. The employers are even more emphatic in their condemnation of governmental interference, and the coalowners of South Wales allege that the chief cause of trouble in the coalfield has been the 'action of the Government in assisting the men to break their agreements.' They further state that the men collectively never broke their agreements until the Government first 'interfered' in 1915."

It is satisfactory to read in the reports, with the one exception of that for Wales, how much the relations of employers and employees have improved in recent years (e.g., Y. & E.M. p. 4, S.W. p. 4, and W.M. p. 10); but better organisation of both sections is needed. "If the

men are badly organised the result is unauthorised local strikes, and if the employers are not strongly federated you have a minority who refuse to pay the district rate. It is the minority which causes trouble" (W.M. p. 10). It is, indeed, suggested that only compulsion can bring the two minorities into line with the two majorities. All employers and employees would then belong to their respective federations.

In South Wales, "a somewhat bitter antagonism has grown up between employers and workers in certain industries, and this has to some extent been fostered by extremists and tactless partisans on both sides. A sense of irresponsibility has thus been created, and the men have shown a tendency to strike on the slightest pretext, despite the advice of their accredited leaders. Such class antagonism has been especially pronounced in the mining industry and in a much lesser degree in the transport industries" (W. p. 20), and four reasons are given for this (*Ibid.* p. 21).

II. PARTICULAR AND TEMPORARY CAUSES OF INDUSTRIAL UNREST

' (a) *Food Prices and Profiteering.* The reports are unanimous that the question of Food Prices is the most important *present* cause (N.E. p. 2, N.W. pp. 14-17, 34, Y. & E.M. p. 3, W.M. p. 8, L. & S.E. pp. 2, 8, S.W. p. 3, W. p. 35, and S. pp. 3, 4).

"No further increase in the price of foodstuffs should be permitted if this can by any means be avoided, and every effort should be made to reduce the present high cost of living. The Commissioners are strongly of opinion that if the Government could devise a plan whereby staple commodities were procurable at prices fixed by the State, coupled with an arrangement for making up from State Funds any losses which might fall on producers or traders arising out of such limitation of prices, that policy would meet with general approval" (N.E. p. 3). This opinion is expressed in much the same words in all the reports, and the action of the Ministry of Food shows that the Government have been impressed by it. The necessity

of cheap food being supplied to the wage-earning classes is stated to be of far more importance in allaying unrest than a rise in wages.

Every report, too, refers to the existence of profiteering "by which is meant the amassing by a few people of abnormal wealth out of the necessities of the country." "The actual increase in the cost of living does not appear to be so important a factor in the workers' mind as the belief that profiteering exists" (S. p. 3). This belief in profiteering, although it is declared to be "the chief immediate cause of unrest" (W. p. 24), is not, however, supported by any real evidence. The nearest approach to evidence is the following extract from the Report for Scotland (p. 3): "The publication in the Press of the balance sheets of trading and shipping companies showing large dividends, and hearing reports of the increase of the price of commodities having been caused by intermediate agency, commissions, etc., tend to create in 'the workers' mind the belief that the few are making fortunes at the expense of the many.' The worker sees in the Press, for instance, that beef from abroad can be laid on the British wharf at 6½d. per pound, and he knows that his wife has to pay three times more per pound for it. He naturally thinks that somebody is making undue profit out of the consumers. He reads reports of bacon lying rotting at the Port of London, or herring in the north of Scotland, or of potatoes being in some places superabundant, and in others non-existent, and he has a feeling of deep resentment that the possibility of such things was not timeously prevented." Against this I will quote the following from the N.W. Report (p. 17): "The wholesalers and retailers who are in the main patriotic men working under difficult conditions feel that much of the criticism directed against them is unfair. A director of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, and chairman of the Produce Section, Mr. Robert Graham, pointed out that many other causes contributed to the present high prices. Of these the most important were the high cost at points of production both at home and abroad, and he cited as a cause of this the Government buyer for the army in Montreal competing against civilian buyers who were purchasing foodstuffs for the industrial world, and by this means we ourselves were raising prices against ourselves. This is a

matter which evidently needs more careful control. Then again he referred to the high freight rates on the Atlantic routes, the great increase in war risk insurances, the difference in exchange rates, and the inflation of the currency. In his view, he expected, in the near future smaller imports, for which higher prices will have to be paid to attract goods from abroad, and he was more concerned that we should have an adequate supply of foodstuffs even at high prices than not have enough. He thought that these matters ought to be put authoritatively before the public who are led by newspaper articles to believe that the profiteer is the sole cause of high prices." The N.W. Commissioners "think that this point of view deserves consideration, for, of course, if the public are allowed to believe that profiteering is the sole cause of high prices they will naturally continue to blame the Government for not dealing with profiteers so long as high prices continue." The whole subject is well and exhaustively dealt with in the Report from which I have last quoted (pp. 14-17), and in the Wales Report (pp. 34-36).

(b) *Housing*. This question is only lightly touched upon in most of the Reports, probably because it is prominently before the nation as a problem which must be solved as soon as circumstances permit. In Scotland the Commissioners had had startling revelations of the acute need of houses in industrial centres, and they expressed the opinion that the industrial unrest caused thereby "can only be allayed by the Government taking steps to grapple with a problem which appears to have grown too great for private enterprise now to meet, by in some way having land in the near neighbourhood of congested industrial districts made available on reasonable terms for building working-class houses and by rendering financial aid for building expeditiously the urgently wanted houses" (S. p. 4). They say "that in Scotland there is an immediate need for somewhere about 100,000 workers' houses, that practically no building has taken place during the war, and that, for some years before that, the number of such houses built was not sufficient to meet the increasing demand for them" (*Ibid.*). In Wales and Monmouthshire, and especially in the South Wales Coalfields, from 40,000 to 50,000 new houses are stated to

be wanted (W. p. 33). Improved railway and transport facilities, by which the population in industrial centres could be distributed over a much wider area than at present (N.E. p. 3), would no doubt lessen overcrowding, but it would be useless unless the necessary houses were supplied. It is well known what has been done by many employers to provide houses for their workmen, and it were to be wished that more had followed their example. In the N.W. Report which deals at length with the question as it concerns Barrow-in-Furness (pp. 31-34), an interesting account is given of what has been done by the Vickers Company to provide housing accommodation for its employees. They have built over 700 five-roomed houses to meet the demand.

(c) *Low Wages in Agriculture.* This cause is referred to in the South-Western District Report, and the recommendation as to a minimum wage of 25s. per week to agricultural labourers has now become the law of the land. It is a great experiment, and it is to be hoped that it may not lead to more discontent than it allays.

(d) *The Subjection of Wage Earners to Income Tax.* This cause is referred to in the Reports for Wales (p. 38) and Scotland (p. 7). Many men are stated to refuse to work overtime because the extra wages would bring them within the range of the tax. "The feeling seems to be that the working man ought not to be required to pay a direct income tax seeing that his class pays a large share of the indirect taxation; or at all events that the limit ought to be fixed at such a figure as to exclude men who earn no more than sufficient to meet their family need." The liability to Income Tax may, however, be a healthy form of unrest, for it "has undoubtedly roused the working man to a sense of responsibility and opened his eyes to the fact that national taxation is a matter in which *all* classes of the community are interested" (S. p. 7).

(e) *Shop Discipline.* There does not appear to be more complaint under this heading than what exists in normal times. The North-Eastern Commissioners are of opinion that every encouragement should be given to the workmen

to bring local or personal disputes up for consideration by the employers through the agency of their trade unions. Past experience has convinced them "of the advantages of the trade unions in adjusting labour difficulties and in bringing about good relations between employers and employed on the North-East Coast," and "that nothing ought to be done to interfere with the usefulness of the Unions" (N.E. p. 9). "Where it is not possible for employers to arrange for personal access to them by deputations of employees who have difficulties to lay before them," they "advocate the establishing of Shop Committees¹ consisting of representatives appointed by the men to confer with representatives of the employers at such times as may be agreed upon for the discussion of questions affecting

¹ Shop Committees are constituted in different ways ; often they are quite informal and exist owing to a quite local arrangement between the employers and workmen of some particular works. In other cases there are shop Stewards appointed for the purpose of seeing that all workmen maintain their trade union membership, for collecting the subscriptions, and for conveying to the members regulations and orders adopted by the Unions. In such cases these men are generally recognised as the medium (or Shop Committee) for discussing with the employers any local difficulties which may arise in connection with labour in that particular business. It is difficult to consider a better basis on which to establish these Shop Committees than that adopted by Railway Conciliation Boards. The different Departments have their own Boards to which Delegates are elected by a formal election conducted under the supervision of the Board of Trade. The men's side of each Board elect their own Chairman and Secretary, and the latter may be a trade union official or some outside person. Formal rules exist for the conduct of business, but where confidence has been established between the two sides the formal rules have been allowed to lapse and the Secretaries are permitted to meet without ceremony, and by this means many little difficulties are smoothed out before they have had time to cause any bad feeling. The two sides of every Board meet periodically, but should important and urgent matters arise special meetings are easily arranged. Every facility is afforded the Secretary of the men's side to meet his Chairman or, if the necessity arise, the men's Delegates for the private discussion of any grievances which may be felt by the workmen. The Secretary is also given every help in obtaining information for the proper guidance of his side. The more the formal rules are allowed to lapse the greater the success of the Boards. Of course this success depends upon the personnel. In some cases the Committees have been productive of nothing but evil, but after new men have gone to the two sides of the same Board the happiest results have been produced.

labour as they may arise in the shops. Should such discussions not result in the settlement of the points in dispute, then the matter should be reported to the Union by the representatives of the men on the Shop Committees" (*Ibid.*). The North-Western Commissioners think the establishment of Shop Committees would do away with a great deal of industrial unrest if they were seriously and honestly worked (Report, p. 36), but how far the establishment of these Committees may affect the work of trade unions is a disputed point. The West Midland Commissioners put the two sides of this question as follows: "There are advantages in having a Committee elected from the organised labour in the shop. It can meet the Management, and discuss and settle grievances which are small and local. It can also meet employers and bring them in touch with their men. It works more quickly than trade union machinery, and it has a local knowledge which trade union officials sometimes lack. It is in touch with all the changing conditions in the shop, whilst the trade union Secretary is not. It decentralises trade union procedure which is at present too much officialised and too little controlled by the rank and file. It creates solidarity among the workers and breaks down trade union particularism. By agreement between employer and workmen, its operation can be extended to such questions as discussion of piece rates and control of minor breaches of discipline. It gives the workmen more control over the conditions of life.

"On the other side, it was urged that the system of settling grievances by discussion between the Management and the local trade union Secretary works well. A Shop Committee would inevitably weaken trade union authority. It would be composed of the wilder and less responsible spirits who were out to make mischief. It would weaken or destroy the employer's authority, and keep the shop in continual turmoil. It would waste time. It would lead to unauthorised strikes. The local trade union Secretary is in touch with conditions in the district. He settles small questions with the Management and reports larger ones to his Union for adjustment in the ordinary course" (Report, pp. 9, 10).

The same Commissioners add that the weight of evidence given to them on both sides was against the change (*Ibid.*), while in the opinion of the Yorkshire and East Midlands

Commissioners the movement in favour of it threatened to become "a most serious menace to the authority and entire work of the A.S.E. and other skilled workers' Unions" (p.3).

(f) *Breaches of Agreements.* "Another cause of unrest and a very important one is stated to be the feeling of uncertainty whether agreements regarding wages and working conditions can be relied upon, even although they have been made by the accredited representatives of employers and employees" (S. p. 8). The complaints come from both sides. "Sometimes the indefinite nature of awards is responsible, and frequently only some individual is at fault ; in other cases ignorance of the terms of the agreement or forgetfulness of its existence may explain the failure to observe its terms. . . . Instances of *organised* disregard of agreements and awards have occurred, but these appear to have a revolutionary significance" (*Ibid.*). The suggestion is made that "all industrial agreements voluntarily entered into by responsible representatives of employers and employees should, if approved by the Board of Trade, be registered ; and when so registered should be enforceable at law on all concerned in that trade or industry. This suggestion is attractive on account of its simplicity, but we recognise, of course, that the matter may be more complicated than appears on the surface ; and, while recording the undoubted fact that failure to observe working agreements is a cause of unrest, we content ourselves with pointing that the above suggestion seems a practical mode of compelling parties who have voluntarily made a bargain to stick to it" (*Ibid.*). The matter is indeed a complicated one, for the suggestion could not be made enforceable without a radical alteration in trade union law.

III UNREST CAUSED BY WAR MEASURES

It was not to be expected that the regulations under the Military Service and Munitions of War Acts could be carried out without a great deal of friction, and the Reports are naturally very full of the subject. The regulations are

stated to "have been enforced and employed by methods which are deeply resented" (Y. & E.M. p. 3). The root causes of distrust are held to be the restriction of liberty, the alteration of agreements, the failures of the Government, and the want of publicity (W.M. p. 3).

I will now proceed to catalogue the various complaints under this head.

(A) DELAYS, CONFLICTS, AND GENERAL INEFFICIENCY OF GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS

One is not surprised to read of general complaints under this head. An outstanding feature of the Wales Commissioners' inquiry "has been the unqualified hostility on the part of witnesses both on the men's and the employers' side to Government interference" (p. 25).

Many of the complaints arise from misunderstandings, and to the confusion caused by the number of Departments dealing with Labour questions (S.W. p. 3, and W. p. 25). No fewer than twelve Government Departments have to do with them (W. p. 25). Not only is delay and confusion caused thereby, but also a waste of time and public money (S.W. p. 5). "Representatives of both the employers and the trade unions concur in the complaint about the multiplicity of Departments. Much of the difficulty arising would appear to be due to the want of complete co-ordination of the provinces or activities of the several offices. Variations, and to some extent conflict, in regulations and methods as well as instructions have been recognised, and much uncertainty exists as to the department to which communications relating to Labour should properly be addressed. Delay, and consequent irritation, have resulted from the embarrassing position" (L. & S.E. p. 5). One is not astonished to hear that "it would have been much better had the parties been free to come to agreements and settle their difficulties between themselves" (*Ibid.*). "In some cases the settlement of questions has been procured only by stoppage or threat of stoppage of work. For example, in one case in which employers and men had agreed to raise a maximum from 20 to 60 per cent. (the Ministry of Munitions having failed to consent) and the matter had been placed before the Committee on Production, it took fourteen weeks to

get a decision. The men affected stopped work twice in consequence ; and it required all the influence of the Union officials to induce the men to resume and continue work." (*Ibid.* p. 6). The Reports for Scotland (pp. 5, 6), for the North-Western area (pp. 17, 20), and for Wales (p. 26) deal at considerable length with the dissatisfaction caused by the want of efficient machinery for the *prompt* settlement of differences. The old Government Departments, such as the Board of Trade, appear to know how to deal with this matter, and what may be called the "upstart" Departments must bear most of the blame. In referring to the strike among the engineers the Commissioners for the North-Eastern area say : "The most serious situation created was in connection with the strikes among the engineers, which took place in the spring of this year (i.e., 1917), and which is alleged to have been entirely due to the long delay in securing arbitration on the question of wages. On the other hand, we have testimony on the part of one Union to the commendable celerity with which wages disputes were settled by the Board of Trade. We were, however, told of a strike of bricklayers in certain steel works which delayed 7,000 tons of shell steel, and resulted in the receipt of the arbitration award within two days of the strike. We were told that a certain section of the men advocated striking because they were convinced that more speedy decisions resulted " (p. 8). The North-Western Commissioners gave an example of what individual effort can do where official interference would fail. "The United Alkahi Company, Ltd., of which Mr. Stuart is the General Technical Manager, employs about 10,000 men and 1,000 women. The bulk of the works are at Widnes or St. Helens, but the Company have other works at Newcastle, Glasgow, London, etc. Practically all their men are Trade Unionists, with whom they work in harmony. Mr. Stuart's main business in life is to handle labour questions, in which he has had fifty years' daily experience on the Tyne and in Lancashire. His experience, he claims, not without justice, has taught him all there is to know, and all there is to avoid in handling labour questions. It is interesting, therefore, that in the forefront he places promptitude in dealing with troubles directly they arise. 'When (he says) applications for advances in wages or for the adjustment of any grievances are made, they are all forwarded to

me in Liverpool. I then, figuratively speaking, take the next train to Widnes, St. Helens, Newcastle, Glasgow, or wherever the communication comes from, and meet the men quietly in the room all sitting round the table. I attach the highest importance to seeing the men immediately after their application is received without a day's delay.' The success of this system, as worked by Mr. Stuart, is undoubted, and the lesson to be learned from it seems to be this. The Company finds that it is a business proposition to appoint a powerful works' Director to deal with their labour matters. He has no legal or police sanction to back up his efforts. He comes to the men, in their Trade Union, directly he is required, not as a judge or an arbitrator, or an official, but rather as a friend and conciliator. He has no cut and dried procedure, no printed rules and orders to fetter his discretion and promote quibbling discussions. The following statement of how he does the business forms a concise gospel of the whole duty of official man in dealing with labour matters: 'I sympathetically hear the men's side of the case, look at it from their point of view, and imagine myself for the time being one of the workmen, asking myself what would be my opinion of their contention if I were one of them. Then I place before them the case of our Company, discussing the two sides of the question in a courteous and friendly spirit, taking care always to recognise the important fact that to manage men successfully you must learn to manage yourself' " (pp. 18, 19). Now listen to the comment of the Commissioners on Mr. Stuart's evidence. They ask, "Why can an individual succeed in promoting peace in the industrial world when governments have for many generations failed to do so?" And they answer their own question as follows: "It is at least interesting that three men" (i.e. the three Commissioners) "of widely different experiences agree with absolute unanimity that what is at the bottom of the trouble is that governments have relied too much on the aid of judges, tribunals, and officialdom guided by cast-iron rules and orders with the sanction of police force at their back" (*Ibid.*). It is to be hoped that this expression of opinion will sink deep into the minds of our legislators. It will at any rate put courage into the hearts of those who are striving to put a curb on officialism as much as possible, and to

show the beneficial effects which a good and sound individualism can produce.

Government Promises not Kept. We are told that the men have lost confidence in the Government owing to its departure from undertakings given to them, and that this has also been a cause of stoppages of work, "which were directed against the Government rather than the employers. The danger lies in the possibility that the example set by the Government may be regarded as an inducement to and a justification for the adoption by the men of the same line of conduct and the treating of their own undertakings as 'scraps of paper'" (L. & S.E. p. 5). The Commissioners of the North-Western district write to the same effect: "There is no doubt that one cause of labour unrest is that the workmen have cause to regard promises and pledges of Parliament and Government Departments with suspicion and distrust. Many an instance has been put before us of what seemed on the face of it a clear announcement amounting to a distinct promise which has afterwards been interpreted by judges and officials to be something quite otherwise. It was painful to hear the common use of the phrase 'a scrap of paper' so constantly used by working men in describing what they felt about the Government promises" (p. 19). This criticism applies also to the calling up of munition workers, and the experience of Vickers Ltd. at Barrow is given as an example (*Ibid.* p. 35).

B. THE MILITARY SERVICE ACTS

"The whole system of the operation of these Acts is, in the opinion of the great bulk of the working classes, an exhibition of bungling, incompetence, and of exasperating dilatory methods" (S. p. 9). They are alleged to work unfairly and to be a great cause of unrest (*Ibid.*). "One thing which would greatly minimise this feeling would be the avoidance of delay in making payments of allowances to dependants of soldiers, and to discharged soldiers" (*Ibid.*).

(a) *The Trade Card System.* It is unnecessary to say much about this system, which gave rise to great discontent and consequent trouble (N.E. p. 4, N.W. p. 11, W.M. p. 4, S.W. p. 4, and S. p. 9), as it has been discontinued

and replaced by the "Schedule of Protected Occupations." "The system operated unfairly because it assumed that skilled men were found in certain Unions, and certain Unions only. These Unions received Trade Cards and could protect their members. Other Unions, containing a large number of skilled men, could protect none. This caused bitterness and dissatisfaction. But a further cause of dissatisfaction was the way in which Trade Cards were undoubtedly used in some cases. Many Unions made a proper use of the high responsibility entrusted to them, but some did not. The cards were used for increasing membership, and men were told that, if they joined certain Unions, they would be protected, while if they joined rival organisations they would not. Further, even when this was not the case, the cards were issued by the Unions in a manner which, to say the least of it, was haphazard. Altogether the scheme was a bad one, and we welcome its withdrawal; but we are bound to point out that the actual withdrawal caused discontent among those whom the system protected. That is more especially the case since the system now introduced—that of the Schedule of Protected Occupations—with 'A' and 'B' certificates, does not at present work satisfactorily" (W.M. pp. 4, 5). The Report for Scotland also refers to the strong feeling "created by the withdrawal of the Trade Card system, after many Unions had gone to much trouble and expense in preparing to carry it out" (p. 9; see also W. p. 36).

(b) *The Schedule of Protected Occupations.* This system, which replaced the Trade Card system, has not worked entirely satisfactorily as above stated. Under it two forms of exemption certificates are issued to all employees of military age in munition works. The Scheduled Occupation Certificate is issued to men protected from military service. The 'Certificate of Protection' is issued to men not so protected. "The title of the latter certificate, however, is misleading and has caused a considerable amount of apprehension in the minds, not only of the men, but also of members of Tribunals. The withdrawal of the latter certificate, we are informed, would remove a prolific cause of irritation" (W. p. 36).

The success of the new scheme depends, of course, on

"the care and circumspection on the part of the officials charged with its administration, and, if the recruiting officers are careful to exercise tact in those cases where mistakes have been made, we have every confidence that there will be little friction" (N.E. p. 4; see also N.W. p. 11, and W.M. p. 5). Further, the idea seems prevalent that employers may use the system for victimisation, because "the appeal to the Enlistment Complaints Committee is not a real appeal. It may have been unwise to promise such an appeal at all, but, as it has been made, the promise should be kept. To our mind the use of the word appeal includes the right to be heard, but it seems to be the practice to decide an appeal against a man without hearing him, and we think this a denial of justice. To send a man a printed form stating that his appeal has been decided against him is bound to be a cause of trouble. It may be that appeals in many cases are dilatory and frivolous, but it passes our comprehension how any man can claim that he is possessed of a judicial instinct acute enough to decide this question merely by reading an official form filled up by an uneducated man. The workman is suspicious that in deciding the question at issue the statement in his own appeal receives no real consideration, whilst the written testimony of his employer is accepted as the only thing that counts. It is contended, not without reason, that this does not fulfil the promises which have been widely advertised by the Munitions Ministry in leaflets which have been distributed in the works" (N.W. p. 24). Again, what happens sometimes is that men entitled to "A" certificates are receiving "B" and *vice versa*. That has cast on the employer the wholly unjustified suspicion that he has shown favouritism in the lists sent in (W.M. p. 5, and S. p. 9). It is good to hear from the Commissioners that such is not the case.

(c) *Preference shown to the Younger Men.* "Employers are alleged to show a preference for the retention of the younger men, and a readiness to part with the older men. We cannot believe this to be a prevalent practice, but one case of unfair discrimination is often sufficient to cause irritation. The fact cannot be ignored that as the demands on older men with family responsibilities in all walks of life, and especially on the commercial classes, have grown

more exigent, feeling has arisen against the exemption of the young single men. The public cannot be expected to appreciate fully the reasons that may render the retention of these young men necessary, and this fact adds force to the suggestion that the Government should so distribute the country's man power as to be able to say that every man is in the place where he is giving the most valuable service" (N.E. pp. 4, 5; see also S. p. 9).

"The employment of Belgians of military age in munition factories, especially in responsible positions, where it is possible they might exercise pressure which would have the result of sending older men into the army while they remained in comfort" (N.E. p. 5), and the enrolment in Volunteer Training Corps, are mentioned as minor causes of unrest.

C. THE MUNITIONS OF WAR ACTS

These Acts have doubtless revolutionised industry. "In normal times the workman is free to leave his employment, whether to secure better wages or on personal grounds; now he can do nothing unless his employer consents or the Munition Tribunals grant a certificate. In normal times an employer can discharge a man; now, owing to labour shortage, that power hardly exists. In normal times, the man has the weapon of the strike and the employer that of the lockout; now both are illegal. In normal times wage changes are settled by collective bargaining; now they are settled by the State. In normal times the employer disciplines his own men; now discipline is enforced publicly in a criminal court. Lastly, the trade unions have fought, rightly or wrongly, and in the engineering trades have fought successfully, for the principle that certain men or certain Unions alone were entitled to certain work. Now this has been swept away, and men and women of rival Unions or of no Unions at all work alongside skilled craftsmen." Thus speak the Commissioners of the West Midlands area (Report, p. 5). Can anyone be astonished at the effect upon employees as well as employers? "These changes," they go on to say, "are strongly resented as infringements on personal liberty, to which men are deeply attached. But beyond this they affect profoundly everyday industrial life. In many cases they are the renunciation of the gains of years,

and what renders the renunciation more bitter is the feeling that all changes bear more hardly on the men than on the employers. This is obviously the case. The employer has to submit to hardships ; he cannot run his business in his own way ; he is perpetually controlled by the Government, and he has a serious shortage of labour and limitation of profits ; but his grievances are not comparable to those of the workman who sees his cherished possessions taken from him. From this feeling, that the workman has lost more than his employer, it is an easy step to the feeling that the restrictions have been definitely imposed in the employers' interest. The more thoughtful men may not feel this ; they are content with stating that, as a fact, the restrictions do bear unequally on the workman and they do not impute any base motive ; but it will readily be seen that the fact lends itself to misrepresentation, and that when men are smarting under a real loss, it is not hard to insinuate that that loss was imposed with an improper intention " (*Ibid.*). There can be no doubt that these Commissioners are right when they add that the Government have never convinced the men that the restrictions on their liberty of action are necessary. What is wanted is publicity. "No method should be neglected in bringing all cases before the people. If the cause is a good one it will find acceptance" (*Ibid.*).

(a) *The Munition Tribunals.* These Tribunals which were set up to deal with disputes and complaints could not be expected to be popular, and they are not. In fact they "are considered by the men to be peculiarly obnoxious, they find it difficult to distinguish them from a Police Court, and they resent the stigma which appears to attach to them. From information placed before the L. and S.E. Commission there would seem to be some justification for the complaint that personal feeling has been the cause of some of the prosecutions, many of which are brought on frivolous or insufficient grounds" (p. 6).

On the question of prosecutions for bad time keeping the Scotland Commissioners say (Report, p. 6) that "workmen complain that they are called before the tribunal without sufficient inquiry being first made as to whether the workman *had* a reasonable explanation for his absence, although he may have omitted at the time to inform his

foreman of it. We are inclined to think that in some instances there has been ground for this grievance, and we are, at all events, of opinion that it does tend to create unrest that employers should prosecute at all." They think that all prosecutions for bad time keeping should be instituted by the Minister of Munitions. "This is already done in the Western Division of Scotland with good results, both in the way of promoting good time keeping and of allaying irritation."

A description of the constitution of the Tribunals, of the objections urged against them by the men, and suggestions for their improved working, will be found in the West Midlands Report (p. 6).

(b) *Liquor Restrictions.* The Reports are not by any means unanimous as to the effect of the restrictions placed on the supply of beer to wage-earners in Munition areas. The N.E. Commissioners do not attach much importance to the subject. They say "there are two aspects to this question, viz. (1) The effect of the Liquor Control Board's restrictions regarding the hours during which intoxicating liquors can be supplied, and (2) the effect of the shortage of beer in consequence of the limited quantity which may be brewed. As regards the first aspect of the question there is a general consensus of opinion that the Board's regulations have done good" (p. 3). The only question was as to what hour in the evening licensed premises should be closed, so as to suit overtime workers. It was suggested to these Commissioners that the time for closing in the North-Eastern area should be 9.30 instead of 9, so as to bring it into line with other parts of England. Certain employers, however, thought that this would be a mistake, and that the better plan would be to allow the men working overtime to get away at 8.30 or 8.45 so as to get refreshments before the closing hour. The second aspect of the question, viz., shortage of supplies of beer combined with the present exorbitant prices, had led to rather more resentment. "The workers are convinced that beer is an indispensable beverage for men employed in the so-called 'hot' and 'heavy' trades. The belief is prevalent that certain parties are endeavouring to use the national exigencies as an excuse for forcing on prohibitions, to which the great bodies of

workers are bitterly opposed. "There was no evidence whatever that excessive drinking existed, and the workers' representatives made it clear that they had no sympathy with men who drank to excess."

The N.W. Commissioners consider that the restrictions contribute to unrest rather than cause it, and that the main grievance arises from the inability to procure good wholesome beer at a reasonable price (p. 25; see also p. 34 of the same Report as to the complaints under this head which came from Barrow-in-Furness. There the regulations are stated to have been a cause of "stoppage"). The W.M. Commissioners "were frankly amazed at the strength of the objections to the liquor restrictions. These came not only from men in the habit of drinking beer, but from those who were life-long teetotalers and yet recognised the need of beer to those working in certain occupations" (p. 9). In the S.W. District the restrictions were not a cause of unrest, though there was some complaint, but not much, as to the price and scarcity of beer in certain localities (p. 3). In Scotland no complaint had come from any quarter of the restrictions being a cause of industrial unrest (p. 12).

(c) *Dilution of Labour.* The reports under this head are conflicting. The North-Eastern area Commissioners found little real objection to the system. "Indeed, so far as we can gather, no objection to its extension on an even wider scale will be taken provided the skilled trades are assured (1) that dilution is really necessary and that it is not being enforced when adequate skilled labour not required for other purposes is available; (2) that, if it is introduced in order to free men for the army, this should be clearly stated, and an assurance given that members of the trade diluted will not be taken for the army so long as militarily fit men who have been taken on under dilution schemes are allowed to remain; (3) that the provisions of the Munitions Acts and Circular L. 6 as to giving reasonable notice of the intention to introduce dilution are complied with by the employers; (4) that the recognised rates of wages are paid in accordance with Circulars L. 2 and L. 3, as these have been modified; and (5) that, if labour has to be displaced for any reason, the members of the skilled trades should not be discharged while the diluting elements are retained"

(N.E. p. 5). The West Midlands Commissioners also cannot find that the system has caused much unrest (W.M. p. 6). On the other hand, we hear that it "has brought about everywhere very intense disappointment and dismay in the minds of the skilled workers, who are fearful as to the subsequent status of the industry. The skilled workers are further perturbed by the very high wages earned by the unskilled and semi-skilled workers being so greatly in excess of the earnings of the highly skilled men and actual instructors, who willingly assisted in dilution, and who have been constantly assured that their work was of far greater national value. In every district typical instances were given in which unskilled workers, labourers women and girls were earning more than double that of the skilled men, thus provoking discontent and acute unrest, not only in the ranks of the skilled men and in their homes concerning the inadequacy of their pay, but also in the other grades of ordinary unskilled labour, where the earnings of the workers have been but slightly increased, and thus made a demand for higher rates of pay, such as would provide the bare necessities of living at the present exorbitant prices" (Y. and E.M. pp. 3, 4). Another complaint about dilution is that it has aroused suspicion in some quarters that it may be used to release men for the army and to prejudice the position of skilled men after the war (S.W. p. 2).

"All agree," say the West Midlands Commissioners, "that women's work has been extremely successful. The men are still suspicious of women's work, partly because it is an innovation, and partly because they feel that it will reduce rates" (p. 6).

There is a general agreement that the system should not be applied to private firms.

(d) *Recording Changes of Practice.* This matter is referred to specially in the North-Eastern Report as follows: "It is one of the many safeguards on which the workmen rely for the protection of the future of their crafts. We are glad to be able to report that the system of recording in this district seems to be well conceived and carefully carried out. Notwithstanding this, there still seems to be a want of knowledge, confined to a few trades, of the methods adopted, and the right to have changes of practice ade-

quately recorded. There is also some objection to alleged changes of practice which are not agreed, being held over for final settlement until after the war. But on the whole we are satisfied that no serious objection can be taken to the method of recording now in force" (N.E. p. 6).

(e) *Leaving Certificates.* The Reports while, pretty well unanimous that this system should be abolished, express fears as to what may replace it. Six fruitful causes of discontent on this score are given in the North-Eastern Report (p. 6). It is, however, unnecessary to enlarge on the subject at any length as the Munitions of War Act of this year enabled the Minister of Munitions by order to put an end to the system, which he has, as reported in the Press of the 26th September last, already done. The workmen were almost unanimously in favour of its abolition while the employers regarded its abolition with considerable apprehension, not "due to any partiality on their part as affording them an undue restrictive power over their employees," but because "they fear a sudden and unsettling disturbance of labour, as it is certain that a large number of men will, for various reasons, immediately seek to change their employment" (see N.E. pp. 6, 7; and also W.M. p. 7, and S. p. 4). "Should this be the case it may be necessary for the Ministry of Munitions to freely exercise its power of veto. This will inevitably give rise to many vexed questions, as will also the numerous cases that will undoubtedly occur under the 'Poaching' clause. The Minister must therefore anticipate the situation, and take steps to minimise the friction. Otherwise the new procedure may be as fruitful of unrest as the old" (N.E. p. 7; and see also L. & S.E. p. 6). It is clear that Mr. Churchill's task will be a very difficult one and that as much unrest as before may be created.

(f) *Restoration of Pre-war Conditions.* This is probably the question which most exercises the minds of the industrial community—employers as well as employees. There exists a considerable feeling on the part of the workers that the pledges of the Government as to restoration of pre-war conditions will prove illusory. The Reports, however, do not support the idea of exploitation (N.E. p. 7, W.M. p. 7).

Indeed, the North-Eastern Commissioners say: " We have frequently regretted that the employers had no opportunity of hearing the reasonable expression of the views of the men on the amelioration of their conditions, and their desire to assist in increasing output, and that the men had not the opportunity of being made directly aware of the broad outlook of the employers with regard to labour and their manifest desire to improve working conditions " (N.E. p. 7). It is important to note that the difficulty in restoring pre-war conditions after the war " is not mainly between the Government on one side and workmen on the other, or indeed between employers and workmen, but rather between different classes of workers. On the one side are the 'Craftsmen' and their Unions; on the other men and women belonging to the 'general' or 'unskilled' Unions. These men and women have attained skill since the war, and are in many cases doing the same work as 'Craftsmen.' They will certainly object to any proposal to expel them from the higher grades of industry " (W.M. p. 7).

The feeling of discontent which has been raised from this cause would, in the opinion of the Wales Commissioners, be allayed by the repeal of all the special war legislation at the earliest possible moment after the close of the war and by the restoration of the pre-war rights and privileges of trade unions which have been suspended, unless they should otherwise desire (W. p. 34).

(g) *Inequality of Earnings and of Sacrifice.* The skilled operator feels resentment in that he is debarred from earning as much as his less skilled companion. This complaint is general in every district, although the grievances are quite restricted in extent in the South-Western area (Report, p. 3). As already stated, evidence was given before the Yorkshire and East Midlands Commissioners that unskilled workers, labourers, women, and girls were earning more than double the wages of the skilled men. " The methods followed in fixing the prices for the pieceworkers appear to have been of a very haphazard and careless character, arrived at generally without conference with those who could have suggested more scientific and equitable methods of securing that the greatest output could have been ensured by advancing skill and the employment of new and improved means of

production. Unskilled workers in some factories are earning from £10 to £18 a week, and could easily earn more but are afraid to " (Y. and E.M. p. 4). This difference in wages is partly explained by semi-skilled workmen and unskilled workmen and women being for the most part engaged on a system of payment by results. Thus the earnings of the skilled men are much less as a whole (L. & S.E. p. 3). In Wales " the high wages paid to boys as compared with skilled men of many years' experience has induced considerable unrest " (W. p. 24). Having regard to the high wages said to be paid to women in Munition Works, it is no wonder that in Edinburgh those employed in the Dressmaking and Millinery trades struck work on account of the lowness of their wages—13s. a week for a woman of ten years' experience (S. p. 8). Various remedies for this inequality of earnings have been proposed (see W.M. p. 8), but piecework when it is possible might meet the difficulty. When it is not possible then the " Fellowship " or shop bonus system is recommended to be tried (*Ibid.* and see N.E. p. 8). " The main objection to the introduction of piece work and especially to the premium bonus system is that the workmen are apprehensive that if they fully exert themselves prices or times will be cut, especially in the post war periods, when they fear that the extra efforts which they are prepared to put forward now in the national interest will be used against them. We, therefore, consider that the expressed intention of the generality of employers not to reduce prices or times in the absence of a change of method should be clearly brought home to the employees, with the assurance that no price or time will be reduced unless, on clearly defined lines which it seems to us not impossible to prescribe, a good reason can be shown for such reduction " (N.E. pp. 8, 9).

(h) *Industrial Fatigue. Canteens.* This fatigue is, of course, caused by overwork and overpressure, and it is emphasised in most of the Reports. It is urged that Sunday work (except to meet special contingencies) should be discontinued, and that overtime should be regulated. Where overtime is necessary " it should be fairly distributed so as to prevent the overstrain of individuals, and also to allay the feeling that sometimes exists that it is unfairly

allotted and does not allow individual workers to earn the extra rates paid" (N.E. p. 9; and see L. & S.E. p. 8, and W.M. p. 9). "There is ample evidence to show that the continuous labour and unduly extended hours during the war have caused a state of nervous exhaustion in large numbers of workers which has made them more susceptible to influences contributing to unrest" (L. & S.E. p. 3). "The workers have been for three years working at high pressure during too long hours and under strenuous workshop conditions never before experienced. They have been denied all opportunities of relaxation and recuperation, and this, too, at a time when there was an ever-growing physical weariness and fatigue" (Y. & E.M. p. 5).

In connection with this subject, and also to allay discontent with the liquor restrictions, the establishment of canteens near the places of employment, and possibly the permission of limited departures from the specified times of opening public houses, are suggested (W. p. 33, and L. & S.E. p. 4). The institution of canteens is, however, stated not to have had "the effect of reducing the feeling of irritation in regard to food, and the inability to procure suitable foods. In many cases the food provided at canteens has not been satisfactory, and the sameness of the food has militated against the success of the movement. No adequate arrangement has been made to meet the reasonable requirements of workers in the matter of refreshment, a difficulty which is in great part due to the large influx of outside labour" (L. & S.E. p. 4). Generally greater regard should be paid by employers to the health, safety and comfort of their employees. "In many cases, however, the whole of the cost of such welfare institutions would not need to be borne by the owners of industrial concerns; in some instances, if the employers manifest a good spirit, the men will respond and will themselves bear their share in the establishment of better working conditions." (W. p. 33). One reason why canteens have not been provided has been owing to want of space in the works; and in some cases where they have been provided they have not been taken advantage of (N.E. p. 9). The reasons why they have not always been successful are set out in the same Report as follows: Inadequate provision of facilities for workmen to wash and tidy themselves, leading to men

having to sit down to meals just as they leave their bench or machine; and the difficulty of serving meals with sufficient dispatch without employing an unduly large staff of attendants (*Ibid.*). The provision of good and well managed canteens might help the housing problem as tending to remove the workman's objection to live at a distance from his employment (*Ibid.*).

IV. SUGGESTED REMEDIES TO ALLAY DISCONTENT

On the general question of the betterment of the conditions of the wage-earning classes "it is necessary," one Report says, "to secure to the working man a fair share of the product of his labour and a just participation in the establishment of the conditions of industry. The workmen consider that they should be treated as men" (L. & S.E. p. 2). It is not much use arguing whether the wage earner does or does not get his fair share and the just participation to which he claims to be entitled, or whether he is exploited as a slave. We must take it that he feels that this is so, and deal with the question from this point of view, and draw attention to the remedies set out in the Reports. To begin with they make it clear that the wage earners as a whole, excluding, of course, the revolutionaries, have found State-action so unsatisfactory that they look to the establishment of better relations between employers and employed for the satisfactory settlement of any disputes and differences which may arise between the two parties.

As stated in the Report of the Reconstruction Committee, which is now called shortly the Whitley Report, "the circumstances of the present time are admitted on all sides to offer a great opportunity for securing a permanent improvement in the relations between employers and employed, while failure to utilise the opportunity may involve the nation in grave industrial difficulties at the end of the war" (p. 3). But it is easy to see that the trade unions, while desirous of taking advantage of the opportunity, are very nervous about the methods by which these better relations may be brought about. They do not wish

to see the workmen in different industries settling disputes, etc., without their help. This fear is illustrated by their action in past years in the matter of profit sharing, and we have already quoted from the Reports about the suspicion with which they regard the setting up of Shop Committees (*ante*, p. 16). They naturally want to have a voice in the relations between the two parties. "Much time," say the Scotland Commissioners, "would be saved (and delay always causes unrest) if employers would deal with one Union, representing workmen of one class, or one Union representing cognate trades, instead of having to negotiate with, and make arrangements with separate trade unions, representing the same class of employees. Competition among Unions is probably also apt to create differences between officials and members, which may add to the difficulties met with when endeavouring to effect a settlement in any trade movement, and it is suggested that the trade union representatives should give serious consideration to the possibility of facilitating expedition in negotiation, and expedite the making of agreements, and promoting more prompt settlement of differences by improved methods of industrial organisation" (Report, p. 10). Compulsory membership of a Trade Union or an Employers' Federation is alleged to be the ideal to be aimed at, and "it is worthy of consideration whether, in the national interest, non-federated employers, or non-union workmen, should be permitted to obtain the benefits of federated agreements without accepting corresponding responsibilities" (*Ibid.*). The same suggestion is also made in the Wales Report (pp. 29, 30). There is no doubt that agreements can be more easily negotiated, and that the machinery for settling disputes becomes more effective, when both employers and employed are fully organised. But the Commissioners appear to have advocated compulsory membership of the Unions without sufficient thought. It is not so much that the man now outside the Union would be forced in, as the bad effect such a policy of compulsion would have on the man already in the Union. He must be obedient to every injunction of the Union however wrong he might know it to be. He must strike or break agreements when told without asking for reasons. It could not fail to have a bad effect on the Unions themselves,

making them autocratic and heedless of the wishes of their members who could not give up their membership under any circumstances without at the same time leaving the particular industry and finding every other industry closed against them as non-unionists.

(a) *National Industrial Councils, District Councils, and Shop Committees.* The Whitley Report, referred to above, recommends that the Government "should propose without delay to the various associations of employers and employed the formation of Joint Standing Industrial Councils in the several industries, where they do not already exist, consisting of representatives of employers and employed, regard being paid to the various sections of the industry and the various classes of labour engaged" (p. 3). This proposal receives general support in the Reports under review, although they naturally criticise it in details (see N.E. p. 10, N.W. p. 22, Y. & E.M. p. 6, L. & S.E. p. 6, S.W. p. 5, and W. pp. 30, 31). The North-Western Commissioners say: "We have no doubt that it would be a great message of hope in this area, both to men and employers, if conferences were called together consisting of the leaders of Trade Unions, and the Directors of Employers' Federations in each trade to discuss how the programme of the Reconstruction Committee can best be made a living fact. We have only one suggestion to offer, and that is in explaining it to working men (b) should be placed before (a).¹ The man at the bench is not greatly interested in District Councils, and National Industrial Councils are to him as far removed from his ambition as the House of Lords, but the Shop or Works Committee is another thing altogether, and this we think should be put right in the front when any endeavour is made to explain the scheme to the working man. We know this by experience because we have tried to explain the scheme in the 'order of going in' assigned to the various

¹ (a) That District Councils, representative of the Trade Unions and of the Employers' Association in the Industry, should be created or developed out of the existing machinery for negotiation in the various trades.

(b) That Works Committees, representative of the management and of the workers employed, should be instituted in particular works to act in close co-operation with the district and national machinery. (See Section 14 of the Report.)

Councils by the Reconstruction Committee. When we approached the matter by describing National Councils first the working man was not interested, as indeed, why should he be? But when we began to describe the scheme, starting in the shop and gradually by a natural evolution blossoming out into District Councils and finally National Councils, he got a real grip of what we were telling him, and seemed to think there was a lot in it, and that it was a practical business affair touching his daily life which he would like to take a hand in" (N.W. pp. 22, 23). This seems to be admirable common sense.

We have already referred to Shop or Works Committees (*ante*, p. 16). The N.W. Commissioners believe that if these Committees were set up generally they would be "a message of hope to those who are rightly dissatisfied with their conditions. Many a sensible young man who now thinks that the only hope of betterment for himself and his class lies in the spreading of advanced doctrines would understand how far more useful he would be to himself and his fellow-men by taking a seat on the Shop Committee and doing direct work in improving the condition of the Shop" (p. 36).

If Joint Standing Industrial Councils were established the machinery of the already existing Conciliation Boards and Works Committees might be adapted or extended so as to undertake the duties which the new Councils are intended to perform (see W. p. 42).

From the debate on "Labour and the War" in the House of Lords on the 7th of November last it appears that the Government, owing to the favourable reception of the proposals of the Whitley Report, have already taken action to carry them out.

(b) *Better Relations between Employers and Employed.* Many of the Reports refer to the excellent relations which already exist between masters and men in certain businesses, and to make this condition of things universal over the whole country is the aim of all reformers who believe that no country can progress and flourish without the "security of capital" as the prime factor. At the same time much more could be done to bring about better relations between employers and employed if the wage-earner felt that the "security of labour" was also a prime object to be attained.

It would be well if the workman could be identified more closely with the control of the industry in which he is engaged. The subject is well dealt with in the Report for Wales (pp. 27-30). "There is good reason to believe that labour will demand after the war a larger place in industry, and we strongly urge that efforts should be made without delay to bring about a readjustment of relations by peaceful means rather than to subject the nation to internal strife at a time when all her energies should be concentrated on the important work of reconstruction" (*Ibid.* p. 27). It is satisfactory to find that Mr. J. J. Mallon, in a Minority Report, is the only one of the twenty-five Commissioners who advocates the "conscription of wealth" (Y. and E.M. p. 7). This, it is generally agreed would put an end to all saving, on which the prosperity and existence of every country depends.

(c) *A Better System of Education.* The Commissioners for Scotland look forward in the future to a better system of education as the main direction in which relief can be looked for in the future, "with a greater insistence on the corporate spirit and recognition of the principle that there is a national as well as a personal element in all industry. This may, we hope, in course of time remove that ignorance and lack of perspective on the part of both employers and employees which is at the root of so many of the labour troubles" (S. p. 4). The subject is referred to in greater detail in the Report for Wales (pp. 44) as follows:—

(i) "The extension of the system of continued education for young persons between the ages of fourteen and eighteen and the widening of the scope of studies to include subjects bearing on the duties and privileges of citizenship and right living.

(ii) "The development of adult education by the establishment through the joint agency of the University Colleges and of labour organisations of classes in industrial centres in which subjects of general human interest may be studied in an impartial and systematic manner under expert guidance, whereby the relations of industry to the community, and the desirability of a broad and sympathetic outlook upon the complex factors of modern society may be adequately realised.

(iii) "The provision of lectures, by arrangement with the University Colleges or other independent bodies, to the employees and management of works and factories, dealing with the nature of the industry, the arts and methods of working and such cognate subjects, as a basis for a mutually clearer understanding of the methods and conditions of employment."

There can be no doubt that the revolutionary element referred to in *The Times* articles in September last draws its chief support from the ignorance of wage-earners, who while they see on the one hand evidences of the display and misuse of wealth by the rich, and on the other hand the misery and degradation in which many of the poor live, do not realise how small a minority comparatively each section of the two classes forms of the whole.

(d) *A Royal Commission*. The Reports make it quite clear that the revolutionary element of labour derives its chief support from the social and economical conditions of the South Wales coalfields, and it is recommended that a Royal Commission of Inquiry should be appointed to conduct a thorough investigation into them. (W. p. 44).

V. CONCLUSION

I have now concluded my examination of the eight Reports, having only drawn attention to the major grievances to which industrial unrest is attributed, but I hope that my review may induce others to get and study the Reports. It will be seen that they are by no means limited to unrest caused by special war legislation, although this has brought the question prominently to the front. They are written with moderation and with the one object of bringing about a better understanding between employers and employed in the various industries of the country, and they will undoubtedly be of very great assistance in the solution of this most important and difficult problem.

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